December, 1939.

Proposal of the Committee on
Processes of Missionary Research

Pam-
Miss'y Research

A PROGRAM OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH
UNDER THE
FOREIGN MISSIONS CONFERENCE OF NORTH AMERICA

I A CONVICTION OF NEED FOR RESEARCH

The world in which we are living is changing so rapidly in almost every phase of its activity and thought life that it is necessary to maintain constantly an attitude of inquiry to enable us to keep abreast of changes that are taking place. Thus we find in increasing measure business organizations and philanthropic agencies maintaining at considerable expense a staff of workers whose main object is to study the particular field of activity of the organization in all of its aspects. In many circles it has grown to be a conviction that the only way in which an organization can keep its contribution to the world at its most effective pitch is to maintain a continuous study of the area of life with which it deals.

To missionary administrators the statement that the world is passing through an era of tremendous change has long been a truism. Their perplexity in knowing how to deal with these changing situations results largely from a consciousness of an inadequate knowledge of many of the elements that enter into them and an inability to appraise these elements at their true value as they relate to the work for which the missionary societies are responsible.

Experts in the realm of social service have come to recognize that the most complex and difficult subject which we now have to study is the constitution of human society, the forces which operate within it and the laws by which they act. As missionary administrators, in addition to such considerations, we have to do with the subtilties and immensities of religion, and all the contacts - philosophical, theological and human - between the historic faiths of mankind. We, of all people, should be alert to avail ourselves of the best processes of inquiry. An additional incentive is found in the fact that during the past few years we have been faced by a world-wide, and at times aggressive, attempt on the part of secularistic thinkers to discredit the missionary program as hopelessly out-dated by the trend of modern scientific thought. Possibly at no time since its origin in the later years of the 18th century has the foreign missionary movement confronted a greater massing of influential, hostile opinion and doubting attitude than today.

The Foreign Missions Conference has for fifteen years maintained the Missionary Research Library which has attempted to provide the materials necessary to the conduct of any investigation on missionary subjects carried on by mission board secretaries, missionaries on furlough, graduate students and others who might be interested. The staff of the library have done their utmost to be aware of the literature on the main subjects with which administrators and other students of missions have had to deal and have always been ready to offer help and guidance in any study undertaken; but within the limitations of time required by their library duties have not been able to initiate or carry on research activities as such on particular subjects.

The International Missionary Council Meeting in Jerusalem in the spring of 1928 reiterated its belief in the necessity as well as the desirability of conducting investigations into matters of mission policy and method which would enable the missionary forces to understand more adequately the situation that exists today and to deal with it more comprehensively and effectively. The Foreign Missions Conference at its thirty-sixth annual session in January, 1929 took the following action:

> "That in view of the repeated emphasis placed during this Conference on the fact that the elements which must be the basis of a constructive program will be secured only by scientific research, boards and individuals are urged to avail themselves of resources at hand in making such technical studies as are necessary to lay foundations for the adjustments that are called for by the present world situation.
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> "The Conference refers this matter to the Committee of Reference and Counsel and requests it to work out a plan for scientific research and present it to the Conference at the next Annual Meeting."

II STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND ITS RESULTS

In accordance with the action of the conference quoted above the Committee of Reference and Counsel appointed a sub-committee on the processes of missionary research. It invited to membership in this committee not only representative mission board secretaries but men and women whose relationship to research activities in other philanthropic and educational organizations provided them with peculiar qualifications to be of help in outlining the field of missionary research. This committee during the year has had a number of meetings and in its discussions has laid down certain general principles of research as it might be undertaken by missionary organizations which are worthy of attention at this point:

1. One of the things that should be stressed is the desirability that all missionaries and those responsible for missionary endeavor should cultivate and maintain an attitude of inquiry toward all their work. That is to say, there should be a continual effort to measure and appraise the value of one's activities in terms of the end that is being served, and it is believed that a great deal of advantage would come to the missionary enterprise if this principle were to be thoroughly observed by individuals and missionaries, both singly and in groups, serving through agencies and institutions connected with it.

2. An attitude and a program of inquiry alone is not sufficient, but should be accompanied by a determination to make practice square with the results of study. The importance of this element cannot be too strongly stressed in trying to produce a missionary policy and technique that will contribute to the complete fulfillment of the missionary purpose.

3. Research activities, so far as the missionary forces are concerned, ought to be concerned with the real needs of the situation and not simply be academic in character.

4. Essentially, the most effective results of research work can be secured if it is possible to carry on the study in the actual processes of missionary work; i.e., what might be termed research by doing, or in the process of doing.

5. Any program that is entered upon in a cooperative way under the auspices of the Foreign Missions Conference should be designed to secure light on matters that are of common concern to at least several of the mission boards involved.

6. That only such ranges of research should be carried on as the mission boards recognize are genuinely needed. This may include in the first instance the necessity for a determination of geographic areas, or boards, or missions, or churches, where research may be most needed at the particular time, or the phases or aspects of research which can be done only following other stages; or in other words, the discovery of the primary subjects whose study will be most rewarding.

Should principles such as these be recognized, it is the opinion of your committee that, in no reasonable mind, would there be ground for the criticism that the boards have come to rely upon research rather than upon the penetrations and compulsions of the missionary motive. Under a well thought out and well regulated process of cooperative study, with no less of spiritual devotion, there would be the advantage of a genuinely scientific approach to the problems of missionary work. We take for granted that from beginning to end the research process would be dominated by the thought of our being engaged in a distinctly religious undertaking. It would be research supplementing devotion, making devotion intelligent on a wide scale, and not research rendering devotion of lesser account.

The Committee after some study and inquiry prepared a list of ten suggestions information on which would seem to be of genuine significance for the missionary enterprise at this time. These suggestions were sent out to the mission boards with the request that they indicate what they considered to be the order of importance in the subjects mentioned. The tabulation of the results of this inquiry indicates that the subject which was considered of most importance was "The re-evaluation of missionary methods". The second choices were (a) "The relation of Christian schools to the national systems of education"; (b) "The financial support of churches abroad" (This subject is already receiving attention by the International Missionary Council). The third choice was "Religious Liberty and missionary freedom", and the fourth "Commercial and Industrial activities of missions". The other five topics receiving lesser degrees of importance as subjects of research are "Training of missionaries on the field", "Standards for measuring missionary results", "Use of Christian literature", "The possibility of syncretism", "Marriage and family life".

The committee regards the first choice of the boards, namely "A re-evaluation of Missionary methods", as both significant and reassuring as to the desire for a genuine understanding of present methods and ideals. It feels that the important elements in such an inquiry would be as follows:

1. Evangelism, its importance, aims, methods, results and relationships.

2. Education, aims, methods, most valuable types, and results.

3. Social service, including medical missions, with emphases on public health, home, industry, agriculture and recreation.

4. Personnel - foreign and nationals, including recruiting, training, allocation to tasks, supervision, etc.

5. Literature.

6. Evaluation of particular Institutions.

Such studies would require the best wisdom of theologians, sociologists and psychologists. They would also require the active cooperation of missionaries of every type.

III TYPES OF RESEARCH

There are three general processes of research which are now being carried on. One is that which is located at the home base. Another is that carried out on the field. And a third is the deputation or commission study. Under the heading of home base studies should be included the books of students of missions which are the result of careful, competent and prolonged study. Another would be the work of students on Ph.D. theses under the direction of professors of missions; and still another would be the type of work carried on by experts in statistical research such as the World Missionary Atlas, and the study of 1929 in the trends of benevolent giving. Some of these studies have been backed financially by research organizations or foundations. A still further type of home base study might be instanced in the work of home base committees such as the one which several years ago prepared the study of the position of women in the church in the mission field. A type of cooperative study linking the home base and the field is represented by the Survey of Moslem Literature which was outlined in America and carried out under the direction of a committee on the field. Among studies carried out on the field could be listed the following types: Those carried out by individuals in much the same way as at the home base, and group surveys conducted in various countries. Some of the instances of this are the "Christian Occupation of China" edited by Mr. Stauffer, the "Study of Opium in India" by Mr. Paton, the "Medical Survey of India" and the "Survey of South Africa".

The third general type of studies by deputations and commissions serves to link together the two areas of activity previously mentioned. Two methods have been employed. One is for a group representing a single mission board to visit its fields. Much effective study has been carried on in this way. Another method has been to have a commission sent out by a cooperating group. Instances of this have been the China Educational Commission, the investigation of village education in India, the two commissions to study education in Africa, etc.

IV CLASSIFICATION OF RESEARCH WORKERS

1. The place of the general worker. In the mind of the committee it is of importance that the missionaries on the field, all of them, develop an attitude of study on the problems with which they have to deal. It is possible that the results of their studies will never be published in book or pamphlet form, but a great deal of valuable information and conclusion has been lost to other parts of the mission field because individuals who have developed peculiarly helpful solutions to these problems in their local areas have not been able to transmit these to others who in other places are dealing with much the same matters but less successfully.

The Committee therefore desires to emphasize the importance of mission boards seeking to inculcate in all their missionaries the general attitude and spirit of study and research to be carried on in connection with the work which they are doing on their particular fields. It should be recognized that the emphases of modern graduate education in our large seminaries and universities ought to contribute the equipment and technique which would qualify missionaries to pursue their work in this spirit.

2. The place of specialists. Perhaps the most common understanding of research is that it is a function of specialists, and certainly much of the valuable research work today is done by those who have been trained to carry out studies on various subjects relating to the general area of life in which they are working. A specialist because he is a person of detached point of view is usually regarded as having particular qualifications for conducting research studies. His services would include the formulation of methods for local or area study or survey, so that the rank and file of secretaries and missionaries may more effectively study their problems. The specialist also can conduct surveys or researches that are either too technical or too extensive for the usual mission staff already heavily burdened with their own responsibilities.

V GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION

Part of the problem which the committee found facing it was the determination of what research, within a total research program, could best be furthered from North America, since it is the North American boards with which we are dealing in this proposed program. Missionary problems vary from those of small village relationships to those of national and international meaning. It is therefore necessary to outline these varying problems and to define the responsibility for their study. Preceding sections of this statement have indicated some of the problems. Classifying them from the smaller to the larger they are as follows:

a. Village and community studies. In some respects these are the most vital of all researches. They should relate to every phase of life from the spiritual yearnings of the people to their simplest and most elemental demands for health, food, and protection from the weather. The whole mission staff should be concerned in the welfare of the people. Herein is both a responsibility and an opportunity for research specialists to outline plans for local surveys for rural and urban communities.

b. Problems of a single mission society. These are of course the concern of each board and its officials. They are naturally divided into two groups, namely (1) those relating to home relationships, and (2) those relating to field service.

c. National relationships of National councils, groups of boards and their field workers. Practically every section of the statement relates to the national boards. It would seem clear that these relationships call for special committees on the field with authority and means to outline the tasks and to make provision for the studies.

d. International relationships of missions. These are the special responsibility of the International Missionary Council and therefore need not be discussed here.

VI PRACTICAL PROGRAM FOR THE FOREIGN MISSIONS CONFERENCE

The committee recommends to the Foreign Missions Conference the provision for a research secretary on the staff of the Conference, with suitable office and budgetary provisions, who shall be given responsibility for promoting a cooperative program of missionary research on behalf of the foreign missionary agencies of North America. It is proposed that such a secretary should have the following responsibilities:

1. To promote in every way possible the spirit and purpose of research and study on the part of mission board organizations, and through them on the part of missionaries on the field.

2. To conduct from time to time specific pieces of research work. It is proposed that the initial study should be within the field of a re-evaluation of missionary methods, since this is the subject that seems to be of greatest interest to the greatest number of boards.

3. To counsel with and to advise individuals who are carrying on particular studies.

4. To collaborate with professors of missions in the assignment of thesis subjects to graduate students and to missionaries on furlough.

5. To assist in directing the studies of furloughed missionaries who are working on some particular problem of direct interest.

6. Cooperate with agencies on the mission field either in providing advice or in the way of building up a background of influence for studies to be carried on.

7. To stimulate experiments on the part of missionaries who have unusual facilities for making such studies.

8. To help in the formulation of proposals for particular studies the support of which is sought from other agencies or organizations.

It would be the duty of such a secretary to seek to discover what techniques of research are likely to prove most practicable in dealing constructively with the various problems on which missions are now needing research; to discover how the boards can be induced to enter upon programs of research for themselves, individually or cooperatively, on particular problems; and to discover what kinds of subjects of research are sufficiently interesting to the boards to elicit their financial support.

It is proposed that there should be a committee on missionary research which would serve as an advisory body to the secretary in the carrying on of the work and in developing the program at any particular juncture. The method to be followed in the subject recommended will be subject to the study of the research secretary, assisted and guided by the advisory committee. This committee and the secretary should be especially commissioned to make every effort in their power to insure such research as is done having an educational value while it is in process, and to produce the results that the research may indicate are advisable. In other words,

the committee feels that we should not be content with simply carrying on research on various subjects but that persistent effort should be expended to carry the results of such research into administrative effectiveness and bring them to functioning in missionary procedure.

The Committee believes that a budget substantially as follows would be indicated for the inauguration of this program, and that additional amounts as they became necessary in the prosecution of any particular piece of research might be sought from outside agencies.

Salary of Secretary	5,500
Salary of Research Assistant	3,000
Stenographic service	1,500
Travel	500
Miscellaneous	1,000
Total	11,500

Nov. 12, 1929.

Chairman, Thomas Jesse Jones, Phelps-Stokes Fund
Dr. E. D. Brunner, Institute of Social and Religious Research
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Miss Margaret Burton, Education and Research Division, Y.W.C.A.
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